DR. JOHN BROWN
AND HIS SISTER
ISABELLA.

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OUTLINES

BY E. T. M'LAREN

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PREFACE.

THESE Sketches are written by a dear friend of ours, known to all of us from childhood as 'Cecy.' She had unusual opportunities of thoroughly knowing my brother and sister, having been with them in joy and sorrow, in health and sickness, sharing and heightening their happiness, and doing more than we can know or understand to lighten their sadness.

What she wrote has been read in manuscript by many of the intimate friends of Dr. John Brown and his sister Isabella: all have recognized the faithfulness of the portraits. I may quote from a letter written to me by Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes, who

knew my brother well, although he never saw him, and loved him as every one did who really knew him: 'I felt every word of it at my heart's root, to use Chaucer's expression. The life itself is so angelically sweet — the nature which won the love of the English and American reading world showed itself so beautifully in his daily life — that no portrait-painter who pictures life in words could ask a more captivating subject. And the writer has wrought her labor of love in a manner worthy of her subject. All is simple, natural, truthful; and the little Memoir leaves an impression as clear and as sweet as if the loving disciple himself had written it. I mean these words to come under the eye of the writer. I trust you will see that they do.'

We know that there are very many true friends of my brother and sister who would wish to read the sketches, and to possess a copy of them, to whom, however, this is impossible while they remain in manuscript; our friend

has yielded to our wish that they should be printed, and I am sure she will have the thanks of all such.

The engraving of Symington Church and Churchyard is from a pencil-drawing made by Ewbank for my father.

ALEX. CRUM BROWN.

EDINBURGH, *Dec.* 5, 1889.

ILLUSTRATIONS.

DR. JOHN BROWN . . . . . *Frontispiece*
After a photograph by Caldesi, London, 1859.

DR. JOHN BROWN . . . . . *To face page* 37
After a photograph by M. Bowness, Ambleside, 1866.

MISS BROWN . . . . . *To face page* 41
From a pencil sketch taken in 1885 (*vide* page 54).

DR. JOHN BROWN.

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WHEN a school-girl I was standing one afternoon in the lobby at Arthur Lodge, talking to Jane Brown, my newest school friend. No doubt we had much that was important to say to one another, and took small notice of what doors were opened or shut, or what footsteps came near. I remember no approaching sound, when suddenly my arm was firmly grasped from behind, and, 'What wretch is this?' was asked in a quiet, distinctive tone of voice.

The words were sufficiently alarming, but I had no sense of fear, for my upturned eyes looked into a face that told of gentleness as truly as of penetration and fun, and I knew

as if by instinct that this was Jane's 'Brother John,' a doctor whom everybody liked. There was no 'Rab and his Friends' as yet. I must have stood quite still, looking up at him, and so making his acquaintance, for I know it was Jane who answered his question, telling him who I was and where I lived. 'Ah!' he said, 'I know her father; he is a *very* good man, a great deal better than ——, in whom he believes.' He asked if I was going in to town, and hearing that I was, said, 'I 'll drive you in.' He took no notice of me as we walked down to the small side gate, and I was plunged in thought at the idea of driving home in a doctor's carriage. We soon reached said carriage, and my foot was on the step, when again my arm was seized, and this time, 'Are you a Homœopathist?' was demanded. I stoutly answered 'Yes,' for I thought I must not sail or drive under false colors. 'Indeed! *they* go outside,' was his reply. This was too much for me; so, shaking myself free, I

said, 'No, they don't; they can walk.' He smiled, looked me rapidly all over from head to foot, and then said in the same quiet voice, 'For that I 'll take you in' — and in I went.

He asked me a little about school, but did not talk much, and I remember, with a kind of awe, that I saw him lean back and shut his eyes. I did not then know how characteristic of him at times this attitude was; but I felt relieved that no speaking was expected. He brought me home, came in and saw my mother, and before he left had established a friendly footing all round. And so began a friendship — for he allowed me to call it that — the remembrance of which is a possession forever.

Many years after, when one day he spoke of driving with him as if it were only a dull thing to do, I told him that when he asked me I always came most gladly, and that I looked upon it as 'a means of grace.' He

smiled, but shook his head rather sadly, and I was afraid I had ventured too far. We did not refer to it again, but weeks after he came up to me in the dining-room at Rutland Street, and, without one introductory remark, said, 'Means of grace to-morrow at half-past two.'

And means of grace it was then and always. I remember that afternoon distinctly, and could write down recollections of it. But what words can convey any idea of the sense of pleasure that intercourse with him always gave? It brought intensifying of life within and around one, and the feeling of being understood, of being over-estimated, and yet this over-estimation only led to humility and aspiration. His kindly insight seemed to fasten rather on what might yet be than what already was, and so led one on to hope and strive. 'I 'll try to be good,' must have been the unspoken resolve of many a heart after being with him, though no one more

seldom gave what is called distinctively 'good advice,' medical excepted.

It was to Colinton House he was going that afternoon. As we drove along, sometimes there were long silences, then gleams of the veriest nonsense and fun, and then perhaps some true words of far-stretching meaning. The day was one of those in late winter that break upon us suddenly without any prelude, deluding us into believing that spring has come, cheering but saddening too in their passing brightness. As we neared the Pentlands he spoke of how he knew them in every aspect, and specially noticed the extreme clearness and stillness of the atmosphere, quoting those lines which he liked so much, —

> 'Winter, slumbering in the open air,
> Wears on his smiling face a dream of spring,'

and ending with a sigh for 'poor Coleridge, so wonderful and so sad.' After his visit to the house he took me to the garden, where he had quiet, droll talk with the gardener, introducing

me to him as the Countess of something or other. The gardener took the Countess's visit very quietly; he seemed to understand the introduction. I remember the interview ended abruptly by Dr. Brown pulling out the gardener's watch instead of his own. Looking at it he replaced it carefully, and, without a word said, he walked away. As we were leaving the garden he stopped for a moment opposite a bed of violets, and quoted the lines —

'Violets dim,
But sweeter than the lids of Juno's eyes;'

then, after a minute, 'What a creature he was, beyond all words!'

I think it was the same afternoon that, in driving home, he spoke of the difficulty we had in recalling so vividly as to hear it once more, the voice of one who is gone. He said, 'You can see the face,' and, putting out his hand, 'you can feel their touch, but to hear the voice is to me most difficult of all.' Then, after a pause, he said, 'For three months I

tried to hear *her* voice, and could not; but at last it came, — one word brought it back.' He was going to say the word, and then he stopped and said, 'No, it might spoil it.' I told him I could recall very vividly the only time I spoke to Mrs. Brown. He asked me to tell him about it, and I did. The next day I met him out at dinner, and by rare good fortune sat next him. We had only been seated a minute or two when he turned to me and said, 'What you told me about her yesterday has been like a silver thread running through the day.'

At one time he drove to Colinton two or three times a week, and knew each separate tree on the road or stone in the wall, and on suddenly opening his eyes could tell within a yard or two what part of the road he had reached. For, if it were true that he often closed his eyes as if to shut out sad thoughts, or, as in listening to music, to intensify the impression, it was also true that no keener

observer ever lived. Nothing escaped him, and to his sensitive nature the merest passing incident on the street became a source of joy or sorrow, while in the same way his keen sense of humor had endless play. Once, when driving, he suddenly stopped in the middle of a sentence, and looked out eagerly at the back of the carriage. 'Is it some one you know?' I asked. 'No,' he said; 'it's a dog I *don't* know.' Another day, pointing out a man who was passing, I asked him if he could tell me his name. He merely glanced at him, and then said, 'No, I never saw him before, but I can tell you what he is, — a deposed Established Church minister.' Soon after I learned that this rapid diagnosis was correct.

He often used to say that he knew every one in Edinburgh except a few new-comers, and to walk along Princes Street with him was to realize that this was nearly a literal fact. How he rejoiced in the beauty of Edinburgh! 'She is a glorious creature,' he said

one day, as he looked toward the Castle rock and then along the beautiful, familiar street shining in the intense, sudden brightness that follows a heavy spring shower; 'her sole duty is to let herself be seen.' He generally drove, but when he walked it was in leisurely fashion, as if not unwilling to be arrested. To some he spoke for a moment, and though only for a moment, he seemed to send them on their way rejoicing; to others he nodded, to some he merely gave a smile in passing, but in each case it was a distinctive recognition, and felt to be such. He did not always raise his hat, and sometimes he did not even touch it; and when laughingly accused of this, he would say, 'My nods are on the principle that my hat is chronically lifted, at least to all women, and from that I proceed to something more friendly.' Once, on meeting a very ceremonious lady, his hat was undoubtedly raised, and when she had passed, he said, 'I would defy any man in creation to keep his

hat near his head at the approach of that Being.'

He was anything but careless as to small matters of ceremony, but then with him they ceased to be mere ceremony, and represented something real. His invariable habit of going to the door with each visitor sprang from the true kindliness of his nature. Often the very spirit of exhilaration was thrown into his parting smile, or into the witty saying shot after the retreating figure, compelling a turning round for a last look, — exhilaration to his friend; but any one who knew him well felt sure that, as he gently closed the door, the smile would fade and be succeeded by that look of meditative pensiveness, so characteristic of him when not actually speaking or listening. He often spoke of 'unexpectedness' as having a charm, and he had it himself in a very unusual degree. Anything like genuine spontaneity he hailed with all his heart. 'Drive this lady to Mutton-

hole,'[1] he said to a cabman, late one evening, — he often gave this as an address, the oddity of the name having a fascination for him. 'Ay, Doctor, I'll dae that,' the man answered, as he vigorously closed the door and prepared to mount without waiting for further instructions, knowing well what doctor he had to deal with. 'You're a capital fellow,' Dr. Brown said; 'what's your name?' And doubtless there would be a kindly recognition of the man ever after.

In going to see him, his friends never knew what style of greeting was in store for them, for he had no formal method; each thing he said and did was an exact reflection of the moment's mood, and so was a true expression

[1] Davidson's Mains, a village near Edinburgh, but its name of Muttonhole is classical. It is referred to in a note in Lockhart's 'Life of Sir Walter Scott:' 'Lauriston, the ancient seat of the Laws, so famous in French history, is very near Edinburgh, and was in their possession at the time of the Revolution. . . . A brother of the Marquis of Lauriston was styled *Le Chevalier de Mutton Hole*, this being the name of a village on the Scotch property.'

of his character. That it would be a hearty greeting, *if he were well*, they knew; for when able for it, he did enjoy the coming and going of friends. At lunch-time he might often be met in the lobby on one of his many expeditions to the door, the ring of the coming guest suggesting to the one in possession that he, or *possibly* she, must depart; and when encountered there, sometimes a droll introduction of the friends to one another would take place. Often he sat in the dining-room at the foot of the table with his back to the door, and resolutely kept his eyes shut until his outstretched hand was clasped.

But perhaps the time and place his friends will most naturally recall in thinking of him is a winter afternoon, the gas lighted, the fire burning clearly, and he seated in his own chair in the drawing-room (that room which was so true a reflection of his character), the evening paper in his hand, but not so deeply interested in it as not to be quite willing to lay it down.

If he were reading and you were unannounced, you had almost reached his chair before the adjustment of his spectacles allowed him to recognize who had come; and the bright look, followed by 'It's you, is it?' was something to remember. The summary of the daily news of the town was brought to him at this hour, and the varied characters of those who brought it put him in possession of all shades of opinion, and enabled him to look at things from every point of view. If there had been a racy lecture or one with some absurdities in it or a good concert, a rush would be made to Rutland Street to tell Dr. Brown, and no touch of enthusiasm or humor in the narration was thrown away upon him.

One other time will be remembered. In the evening after dinner, when again seated in his own chair, he would read aloud short passages from the book he was specially interested in (and there was always one that occupied his thoughts chiefly for the time), or would listen

to music, or would lead pleasant talk.[1] Or later still, when the work of the day over and all interruptions at an end, he went up to the smoking-room (surely he was a *very* mild smoker?), and giving himself up entirely to the friends who happened to be with him, was all that those who knew him best now gladly and sorrowfully remember but can never explain, not even to themselves.

In trying to describe any one, it is usual to speak of his manner; but that word applied to Dr. Brown seems almost unnatural, for manner is considered as a thing more or less consciously acquired but thought of apart from

[1] In letters he often refers to books new and old. 'I am reading, or rather browsing as the cattle down in the haugh, on all sorts of herbage, a bite here and a bite there. I finished (in tears!) "Guy Mannering" last night; it is perfect, in nature, in humor, in pathos. What a dreary book Lord Amberley's must be! — a man shutting his eyes, or rather deliberately putting them out, and then howling that he cannot see, *and that nobody else can*. I'll send you Mr. Erskine's "Letters." There are wonderful flowings out of refreshing heavenly joy and peace, the very dew of holiness.'

the man. Now in this sense of the word he had *no* manner, for his manner was *himself*, the visible and audible expression of his whole nature. One has only to picture the ludicrousness as well as hopelessness of any imitation of it, to know that it was simply his own, and to realize this is to feel in some degree the entire truthfulness of his character: 'If, therefore, thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light.' Perhaps no one who enjoyed mirth so thoroughly or was so much the cause of it in others ever had a quieter bearing. He had naturally a low tone of voice, and he seldom raised it. He never shouted any one down, and did not fight for a place in the arena of talk, but his calm, honest tones claimed attention, and way was gladly made for him. 'He acts as a magnet in a room,' was sometimes said, and it was true; gently but surely he became the centre of whatever company he was in.

When one thinks of it, it was by his smile and his smile alone (sometimes a deliberate

'Capital!' was added) that he showed his relish for what was told him; and yet how unmistakable that relish was! 'I'll tell Dr. Brown,' was the thought that came first to his friends on hearing anything genuine, pathetic, or queer, and the gleam as of sunlight that shone in his eyes and played round his sensitive mouth as he listened, acted as an inspiration, so that friends and even strangers he saw at their best, and their best was better than it would have been without him. They brought him of their treasure, figuratively and literally too, for there was not a rare engraving, a copy of an old edition, a valuable autograph, anything that any one in Edinburgh greatly prized, but sooner or later it found its way to Rutland Street, 'just that Dr. Brown might see it.' It seemed to mean more even to the owner himself when he had looked at it and enjoyed it.

He was so completely free from real egotism that in his writings he uses the pronouns 'I'

and 'our' with perfect fearlessness. His sole aim is to bring himself into sympathy with his readers, and he chooses the form that will do so most directly. The most striking instance of this is in his 'Letter to Dr. Cairns.' In no other way could he so naturally have told what he wishes to tell of his father and his father's friends. In it he is not addressing the public — a thing he never did — but writing to a friend, and in that genial atmosphere thoughts and words flow freely. He says, toward the beginning, 'Sometimes I have this [the idea of his father's life] so vividly in my mind, that I think I have only to sit down and write it off, and do it to the quick.' He did sit down and write it off, we know with what result.

Except when clouds darkened his spirit (which, alas! they too often did), and he looked inwards and saw no light, he seemed to have neither time nor occasion to think of himself at all. His whole nature found meat and drink in lovingly watching all mankind,

men, women, and children, the lower animals too, — only he seldom spoke of them as lower, he thought of them as complete in themselves. 'Look at that creature,' he said on a bright sunny day as a cab-horse passed, prancing considerably and rearing his head; 'that's delightful, he's happy in the sunshine, *and wishes to be looked at;* just like some of us here on the pavement.' How many of us on the pavement find delight in the ongoings of a cab-horse? His dog, seated opposite him one day in the carriage, suddenly made a bolt and disappeared at the open window. 'An acquaintance must have passed whom he wished to speak to,' was Dr. Brown's explanation of his unexpected exit.

In 'The Imitation' it is said, 'If thy heart were sincere and upright, then every creature would be unto thee a looking-glass of life.' It was so with Dr. Brown. His quick sympathy was truly personal in each case, but it did not end there. It gladdened him to call forth the

child's merry laugh, for his heart expanded with the thought that joy was world-wide; and in the same way sorrow saddened him, for it too was everywhere. He discovered with keenest insight all that lay below the surface, dwelling on the good, and bringing it to the light, while from what was bad or hopelessly foolish he simply turned aside. He had friends in all ranks of life.[1] He was constantly forming links with those whom he met, and they were links that held fast, for he never forgot any one with whom he had had real contact

[1] Once I saw him going down his own door-steps leading a lady to her carriage, but he stopped for a moment to give his left hand, the right not being free, to a very poor woman who was making for the door. She stood on the mat till the carriage drove off, then her turn came, and with a look of cordial welcome he went with her to the study. A few hours after his death, as I stood at the door, a poorly-dressed widow passed and looked at the house with interest. When she noticed the blinds were drawn she stopped and said anxiously, 'Is onything wrang wi' the Doctor?' I told her as gently as I could. Tears sprang into her eyes and she turned away. I asked her if she would like me to give her name as inquiring. 'No, no,' she said, 'my name is naething to ony o' them now, but *he* kent me — ay, he *never* passed me.'

of spirit, and the way in which he formed this contact was perhaps the most wonderful thing about him. A word, a look, would put him in possession of all that was best and truest in a character. And it was character that he thought of; surroundings were very secondary with him. Though he thoroughly appreciated a beautiful setting, the want of it did not repel him.

'Come and see a first-rate man,' he said to me one day as he met me at the door. And here in the dining-room stood a stalwart countryman, clad in rough homespun, with a brightly colored 'cravat' about his neck, his face glowing with pleasure as his friend (for he evidently considered Dr. Brown his friend) looked up at him. They had met that morning, when the man came asking admission for a child to the Infirmary, and now he had returned to report his success. The look of keen and kindly interest with which every word was listened to might well encourage him to 'go on,' as he was frequently told to do. 'The wife' figured now

and again in the narration, and as he rose to go, the beaming look with which Dr. Brown said, 'And you 're fond of your wife?' was met by a broad smile of satisfaction, and, 'Ay, I 'm fond o' her,' followed by a hearty shake of the hand. 'His feelings are as delicate as his body is big,' was Dr. Brown's remark as he returned to the room after going with him to the door.

It is Ruskin who says, 'The greatest thing a human soul ever does is to *see* something, and tell what it *saw* in a plain way. To see clearly is poetry, prophecy, and religion all in one.' Dr. Brown was constantly seeing what others did not see, and the desire to tell it, to make others share his feelings, forced him to write, or made it impossible for him to do so when not in writing mood. To prescribe a subject to him was useless and worse. What truer or shorter explanation can be given of the fascination of 'Rab and his Friends' than that in James, in Ailie, and

in Rab he 'saw something' that others did not see, and told what he saw in 'a plain way,' — in a perfect way, too? 'Was n't she a grand little creature?' he said about 'Marjorie,' only a few months before his death. 'And grand that you have made thousands know her, and love her, after she has been in heaven for seventy years and more,' was the answer. 'Yes, *I am glad,*' he said, and he looked it too. He was not thinking of 'Marjorie Fleming,' one of his literary productions, as it would be called, but of the bright eager child herself.

But the words he applied to Dr. Chalmers are true as regards himself, 'We cannot now go very curiously to work to scrutinize the composition of his character; we cannot take that large, free, genial nature to pieces, and weigh this and measure that, and sum up and pronounce; we are so near as yet to him and to his loss, he is too dear to us to be so handled. "His death," to use the pathetic

words of Hartley Coleridge, "is a recent sorrow, his image still lives in eyes that weep for him."' Though necessarily all his life coming into close contact with sickness and death, he never became accustomed, as so many seem to do, to their sorrowfulness and mystery, and the tear and wear of spirit involved in so many of his patients being also his close personal friends was, without doubt, a cause of real injury to his own health.

I shall never forget the expression of his face as he stood looking at his friend, Sir George Harvey,[1] for the last time. He had sat for a long while holding the nearly pulseless wrist; then he rose, and with folded hands stood looking down earnestly on the face already stamped with the nobility of death, his own nearly as pale, but wearing too the traces of care and sorrow which had now forever vanished from his friend's. For many minutes he stood quite still as if rapt

[1] Late President of the Royal Scottish Academy.

in thought; then slowly stooping, he reverently kissed the brow, and silently, without speaking one word, he left the room.

I have spoken of the first time I saw him; shall I tell of the last — of that wet, dreary Sunday, so unlike a day in spring, when, with the church bells ringing, John [1] took me up to his room, and left me there? He was sitting up in bed, but looked weaker than one would have expected after only two days' illness, and twice pointing to his chest he said, 'I *know* this is something vital;' and then musingly, almost as if he were speaking of some one else, 'It's sad, Cecy, is n't it?' But he got much brighter after a minute or two, noticed some change in my dress, approved of it, then asked if I had been to church, and, 'What was the text?' [2] smiling as he did so, as if he half expected I had forgotten it. I told him, 'In the world ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome

[1] Dr. Brown's only son. [2] See Note A.

the world.' 'Wonderful words,' he said, folding his hands and closing his eyes, and repeated slowly, 'Be of good cheer;' then, after a pause, 'And from *Him*, our Saviour!' In a minute or two I rose, fearing to stay too long, but he looked surprised, and asked me what I meant by going so soon. So I sat down again. He asked me what books I was reading, and I told him, and he spoke a little of them. Then suddenly, as if it had just flashed upon him, he said, 'Ah, I have done nothing to your brother's papers but look at them,[1] and felt the material was splendid, and now it is too late.' Some months before, when he was exceedingly well and cheerful, he had told me to bring him two manuscript books I had once shown him, saying, 'I have often felt I *could* write about *him*, as good a text as Arthur Hallam.' I told him it would be the greatest boon were he to do it; but he warned me not to hope too much. After a

[1] See note B.

few minutes, again I rose to go. His 'Thank you for coming,' I answered by 'Thank you for letting me come;' and then, yielding to a sudden impulse, for I seldom ventured on such ground, I added, 'And I can never half thank you for all you have been to me all these years.' 'No, you must n't thank me,' he said sadly, and a word or two more, 'but remember me when you pray to God.' I answered more by look and by clasp of his hand than by word; but he did feel that I had answered him, for 'That 's right,' he said firmly, his face brightening, and as I reached the door, 'Come again soon.'

The next time I was in that room, four days after, May 11, 1882, it was to look on 'that beautiful sealed face,' and to feel that the pure in heart had seen God. Sir George Harvey once said, 'I like to think what the first *glint* of heaven will be to John Brown.' He had got it now. What more can or need we say?

December, 1882.

Note A (p. 34).

'*What was the text?*'

Dr. Brown remembered the sermons he heard, and sometimes in letters referred to them in characteristic fashion. 'We had a manly sermon on Sabbath from ———, evangelical rump-steak.' 'I had a delightful Sunday, — a strong, old-fashioned Baptist sermon, in a little church in the wood; the text, "What is that to thee? *Follow thou Me;*" only he roared and vociferated; it was like the sharp shattering discharge of a Calvinistic mitrailleuse in your face.'

'Our minister was on "The Prodigal Son;" who can say more than, or as much as, the simple Divine words? What a Father!'

Note B (p. 35).

'*Ah, I have done nothing to your brother's papers!*'

Taken away in early manhood, he was deeply mourned; and a sister may be forgiven if she adds in a note words which Dr. Brown wrote after reading some of her brother's papers: 'He has humor of the best, with at times a fine subdued irony, and a real *style*, which you know Buffon says "is the man," and is the hole at which genius likes to peep out with his gleaming een. If he had not been one of the best of merchants,

he would — certainly might — have been one of the best of writers, for he has both "the vision" and "the faculty," the thought and feeling, and the curious felicity of words which makes thought at once new and true, and crystallizes it, making the whole his own, and nobody else's.'

ISABELLA CRANSTON BROWN.

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TRY to see with the 'inward eye' a house facing south, built of fine gray stone, the good quality of which can be noticed in the pillars of a porch, too large perhaps for what it leads to, but suitable as an entrance to a house not quite of the usual type. A window above the porch, one on each side of it, and to the east an additional window in a wing are all that is seen from the front. The ground around slopes gently, and is divided into a lawn, gravel walk, and shrubbery beyond. Wait for a minute or two, and if it is summer and afternoon, the porch door will open, and you will see coming quickly down its steps a small, slight, middle-aged lady. She wears a black dress, or one of a very quiet color,

having no undue amplitude of skirt, and reaching only to her ankles, — a dress in which utility is evidently the first consideration, but pretty too, and of fine soft material. A light shawl is round her shoulders, so small as in no way to impede the free movement of her arms ; and not only *on* her head but framing her face — a face kind, bright, sensitive — is a beautifully fresh cap formed of rows of finely plaited tulle, with a single bow of white ribbon behind, strings of the same white ribbon being tied or fastened by a small brooch under her chin.

She will cross the gravel walk, and reach the lawn with accelerated velocity, then suddenly pause, stoop, and with a small tool which she holds in her hand will vigorously unearth any dandelion plant that dares to flaunt on that green sward. Possibly while she is at her work the gate bell is rung, and she leaves the dandelions as abruptly as she came to them and after a warm welcome to her guest, returns with him or her to the house. The

newly-arrived may be of any age or rank or either sex, but the greeting is equally genuine. If it be some old divine or young student or well-known civic dignitary, 'You have come to see my father,' she says, and leads the way to the eastern room, the library, which commands a lovely view of the surrounding country. Here is seated, or presently enters, a tall, benignant-looking old man. His eyes are pensive, luminous, and kindling, and though his forehead is bald, his hair perhaps first attracts attention. It is long, but not straggling, ending in a natural roll and white as snow, while his eyelashes and delicately arched eyebrows are jet black. Any one who reads this sketch probably knows the house and its inmates. It is Arthur Lodge, Newington; the beautiful old man is Dr. Brown of 'Broughton Place,' — his name a household word in Edinburgh forty years ago, — and the small, slight, middle-aged lady is his daughter Isabella.

Isabella Cranston Brown was born at Biggar

on the 31st of October, 1812. She was named after her paternal grandmother, who died when her father was not quite twelve years old, but of whom in old family papers interesting traces remain. Her signature, shaky and feeble, is seen at the foot of 'a covenant,' — signed only a few days before her death by herself and her husband, John Brown of Whitburn, in which they 'give up ourselves, soul and body, and our children, to God for time and eternity, to be directed, managed, and saved by Him.' Also in a rough little paper book, and in a boyish hand, being evidently copied by her son soon after her death, are records such as the following: 'The Lord enabled me, when about six or seven years of age, to take much delight in repeating psalms and hymns, and to be given to secret prayer.' And, 'I remember that another girl and I, in our early youth, used to pray and converse together in a wood near Kelso.' She is said to have been very beautiful, and her son was strikingly like her.

Touching reference is made to her by Dr. John Brown in his 'Letter to Dr. Cairns.' No wonder the Isabella Brown of whom we now speak was glad to bear the name of one so lovely and so good.

Our Isabella was scarcely four years old when her own mother died, but she was love-loyal to her all through a long life. She dwelt on the thought of her in a way that was quite remarkable. She could vividly recall being told of her death. 'I was at Callands,' I have heard her say, 'and Aunt Aitken took me on her knee and told me God had taken my mother home.' 'I know I remember this,' she would eagerly tell us, 'for I always, in thinking of it, pictured it as happening in a room seldom used as a sitting-room, and I asked Aunt long after and found I was right; so you see I remembered it,' she would say almost with triumph. And again, 'Another thing I verified as to my remembrance of my mother. She took medicine out of a strangely-

shaped bottle, and of a bright color. I once spoke to John about it, and he knew what it must have been, and thought she was very likely to have got it.' No one could hear her speak of her mother without feeling that it was beautiful and wonderful to see the eagerness in her old face, when referring to the young mother whom she had so early lost. Those who can recall this feature in her character feel that the desire, often expressed and distinctly stated in her will, 'I wish to be buried in the same grave as my mother,' was not mere sentiment, as some might call it, but the expression in symbol of one of her deepest feelings. She had a daughter's heart. Dr. John Brown tells, in speaking of his early life, how their mother's death affected their father in many ways, and that although he was much with his childen, giving them 'all the education they got at Biggar,' he was more silent and reserved than he had been before. He says, 'We lived, and slept, and

played under the shadow of that death, and we saw, or rather felt, that he was another father than before.'

And yet their childhood must have had its happy days too, if we may judge by the pleasure with which they looked back to their home in that quiet pastoral country. And the sunny Saturdays spent among the hills must have been a very distinctive part of their education. On one of them Dr. John found out the mystery of the well, 'far up among the wild hills,' caught its 'soul,' on 'one supremely scorching summer day, when the sun was at its highest noon.' Even then they felt the fascination which continued with them through life, of 'the sleep which is among the lonely hills,' and listened to the stillness, profound, but for the murmur and tinkle of the burn, or perhaps the sudden passing of a big, satisfied bee, whose hum breaks and yet completes the silence.

They had occasions, too, when their best

dresses were needed; for Isabella used to describe the glories of 'white muslin frocks, with neat little frills and blue sashes,' which she and Janet rejoiced in, and in which 'Janet at least looked very pretty.' But I think the time she most distinctly remembered wearing hers was not at a 'dancing ball' (I quote a well-known divine), but at the family dinner at Callands, after the baptism of her cousin and lifelong friend, Andrew Aitken.

I have seen letters of Dr. John's to her when she was quite young, in which playful reference is made to her habit of repeating poetry, and she is advised to commit to memory 'Now came still evening on.' One suspects that she *had* committed it to memory, and that perhaps her brothers had heard it oftener than they desired. Then when she is paying a short visit to friends, she is adjured to come home at once, and addressed as, 'Queen of this our dwelling-place.' But in early letters the light in which she is most frequently seen is that of

a softening medium between her brothers and grandmother, their mother's mother, who took charge of them during their childhood and youth. Statements of accounts (and very innocent statements they seem) are made to her.[1]

[1] In one of his letters to her he says, 'I shall give you a full account of my outlays, my extravagance, and my wardrobe.' Here follows a long list in which there are such items as, 'A pair of spurs, 10*s.*; quite necessary, but perhaps I might have got a cheaper and not so good a pair. Leeches for a poor miserable child, 3*s.* Gloves — here I am sure you will be angry. I had two good pairs with me, and I have bought one pair, 3*s.* 6*d.*; another, 4*s.* 6*d.*; another, 3*s.* 6*d.*; another, 3*s.* Of this I am quite ashamed. I seem to carry about with me an unaccountable carelessness of these things.' Finally there comes, 'To Mr. H., £1 1*s.* You of course ask who is Mr. H., and how came I to give him £1 1*s.* He is a first-rate classic, and teaches (or rather taught) privately; I went to him and had a two hours' lesson, which was to be given once a week. Being determined to be very generous and very gentlemanly I paid him at once £1 1*s.* I have never had another lesson. He was shortly cast into prison for unavoidable debt, and wrote to me promising *if possible* to return me the money *when* he was liberated from Maidstone Jail!' This letter is written in 1832, the year of the cholera, and dated from Chatham, where he spent some time as assistant doctor. He did good, brave work then, knowing no fear when duty called him. Long years after, Charles Dickens, when in Edinburgh, spoke at a private dinner-party

Dr. John seems very early to have felt 'Grandmother's Rhadamanthine' rule, as he calls it. And perhaps Isabella felt it too; but loyalty to 'Grandmother' was very deep in her nature, and the almost exaggerated idea which she had of upholding her authority made it more difficult for her, as a young girl, to show the sympathy with her brothers which she truly felt. In later life the expression of this sympathy had no hindrance.

During the few happy years of her father's second marriage, to wait on her grandmother, whose strength was beginning to fail, became her first duty. When her brother William began practice in Melrose, she and her grand-

of the shameful cowardice displayed by many during the cholera epidemic, and in contrast, told of the courage of a young Scottish doctor at Chatham, describing, among other incidents, how he stayed with a poor woman whom all had deserted, ministered to her to the end, and then, overcome with fatigue, fell asleep, and had to be waked, when at last some one ventured to open the door. 'That was Dr. John Brown,' one of the party exclaimed. Dr. Brown himself was present.

mother went to live with him. It was very remarkable how all her life long, when one work was taken from her or completed, another was given, and this took place very markedly now.

As her grandmother's life drew rapidly to a close, it became only too evident that her father would again be left a mourner. His wife lay hopelessly ill in her mother's house at Thornliebank, and Isabella had letters from him urging her to come. Doubtless the dying mother wished with her own lips to commend her little children to their elder sister's care. But her grandmother she could not leave.

When the end at last came and she was needed no more, without an hour's delay she set off. It was a 'Sabbath' morning (she never called it Sunday), and she was in time to catch the coach to Edinburgh. I have heard her describe in her graphic way how she reached Edinburgh when the church bells were ringing, and how strange and far off they sounded to her, so bent on continuing her journey, on

this the first and only time in her life when she wished to travel on that day. But there was no coach to Glasgow, or she was too late for it. There were no telegrams then, and she could do nothing but wait till the Monday morning. When she reached Thornliebank all was over. To care for her father and his three little children was now to be the work of her life, and with all her heart she accepted it. She did a mother's part, and she had her reward. More and more as she grew older, Jane [1] and Alexander,[2] and all that concerned them and theirs, became the centre of her interest, though the circumference was wide enough; and after her death, in the box which held her few, very few valuables, were found some of the toy treasures of the 'little Maggie,' [3] so early taken but never forgotten. Through all the long years of her life it was with the tremulousness of voice

[1] Wife of Rev. Dr. J. Stewart Wilson of New Abbey.

[2] Professor A. Crum Brown, Edinburgh.

[3] See letter to Dr. Cairns, page 72.

that tells of a lasting grief that she named her.

Some years after she had begun to take the management of her father's household, a serious illness laid her aside, and made the discharge of home duties impossible. But shortly after coming to Arthur Lodge her health was completely restored, and continued unbrokenly good till within a year of her death. Now that I think of it, she can scarcely have been even middle-aged when Arthur Lodge became her home, and I made the acquaintance of the family; but our ideas of age get only very gradually adjusted, and to a school-girl she looked old.

Indeed I cannot recall distinctly the first time that I saw her, but I can the first time I saw her father. I was in the dining-room alone, waiting, I suppose, for Jane, but I can have offered no explanation of my presence, for after a minute or two he laid his hand on my shoulder and said, 'Whose daughter are

you?' I remember the sudden 'irradiation of his smile' when I told him, and then his emphatic 'You will always be welcome here.' Surely I must have felt as if quite unexpectedly I had got a certificate from one of the patriarchs, or rather that my father had. 'Jane, these are very nice people, *so like ourselves*,' was Isabella's remark on becoming acquainted with our family, — a verdict that in after years we often referred to, laughed over, and rejoiced in.

My earliest recollections of her are in connection with Friday evenings, when, there being no lessons to learn, it was allowable to ask school-friends to tea, and I was often invited. It was genuine tea in those days, a real meal, over which a blessing was asked, and to which a procession was made (for it was served in the dining-room) headed by Dr. Brown. A memorable face and figure his was! He was 'a preacher of righteousness,' and well and faithfully he did his work;

but his expression, his whole bearing, without one spoken word, proclaimed the reality of a spiritual world. 'For they that say [or look] such things declare plainly that they seek a country.' Sometimes it was Mrs. Young, his eldest daughter, whom he led in, whose face had a beauty radiant of the spirit like his own, and to whom in bright, early days surely Wordsworth's lines might have been applied: —

> 'And she hath smiles . . .
> That spread and sink and rise,
> That come and go with endless play,
> And ever as they pass away
> Are hidden in her eyes.'

At other times it was Miss Mayne ('cousin Susan') with whom he crossed the hall, — the hall had something impressive about it, the doors of all the principal rooms were made of oak, — and the way in which he led her from the library, and seated her at the table, struck me even in those heedless days. He had a look all the time as if he were taking care of

her, and as if his thoughts were concentrated on so doing. Perhaps Miss Mayne's deafness increased this effect, for speaking to her was well-nigh impossible. Indeed speaking was not a strong point at meals at Arthur Lodge. What was done in that direction on those Friday evenings was led by Isabella, who from her seat at the head of the table dispensed hospitality by word and glance, nodding kindly looks of inquiry as to viands, and giving a swift, running commentary on things in general to her young sister and brother and their friends.

Perhaps young people nowadays might think such occasions rather slow, but I know I was always glad to be there. 'Plain living and high thinking,' — but indeed the living seemed to me anything but plain: all manner of bread and scones, jelly of the clearest, and cream that quite reluctantly left the quaint little cream-jug — I can see it now.

When one looks back, now that the sum of

her days is told, one can see what true, lasting work she did in all the relationships that most closely touched her heart. It was as daughter, sister, aunt, cousin, friend that her life was passed, and a full, happy, if at times careworn, life she often felt it to have been. It has been said that she had 'a genius for friendship,' and indeed she had. She had friends among 'all sorts and conditions of men,' women, and children. Certainly children were not passed over by her; her rapid glance, when it lighted on them, paused and ended in a smile and nod. If her smile was responded to, ever so slightly, she felt as Mr. Erskine of Linlathen did when he 'used to fix a child's eye by a look of kindness, That child's spirit and mine have communion.' But though she might begin with the children, she did not end there; the young mother would be sympathized with, or the old man whose days were nearly ended. Always and everywhere, intercourse with those about her

was turned into a real lasting bond. I know nothing as to her 'calls,' as offers of marriage were designated by the maiden aunt of her friend, Dr. William Robertson of Irvine, but I do not think there ever had been one that she found it difficult to set aside. 'Calls' can sometimes, not always, be averted, and she may have addicted herself to this in early days, or perhaps her entire absorption in home-life formed a kind of hedge around her. At any rate, she found it difficult to picture to herself a love strong enough to compete with that which drew her to her father, and made her happy in ministering to him. Perhaps this may account for the strange anomaly in her loving, sympathetic nature, that a friend's becoming 'engaged' seemed to discompose her, and it was some time before she could quite adjust herself to the new position. She seemed scarcely to understand or relish the immense leap which had been taken, by which One distanced all others, and friends, however dear,

were left far in the background. But the initial stage over, then she righted herself, and a new home was a new centre for love and interest.

In thinking of how her life was spent, one can see how emphatically she belonged to what must now be called 'the old school.' Thoroughly educated she certainly was, and her vigorous intellect took and kept hold of what it received. She had the power of assimilating knowledge and making it her own, while her imagination was easily aroused, and her perceptions were quick and sensitive. One who knew her well writes: 'It was very striking to us, who saw her only now and then, to find her always stored with what was best and freshest, and ready to describe and convey it in her own keen, quick way. Perhaps our rare visits tended to our thus receiving this very vivid impression, — going away with the sense, as it were, of having had a fresh charge of electricity.' But of the 'higher education of women,' as it is now understood,

she had none. For a long time she looked upon Girton almost with dread; but as one by one girls whom she knew and loved went there, her interest became excited, and she began to see 'some good in it,' though to the end she raised a note of caution. The same process took place in her mind as regarded women becoming doctors. At first there was a horror almost too deep for words; then when one whom she loved, and whose *mother* she had loved in youthful days, joined the ranks, she saw in *that* case some ameliorating circumstances, and the cases gradually multiplied. But as regarded herself, there was no trace of her ever having felt the need of a 'sphere.' Indeed, she used thankfully to tell that work clear and definite had been given her. The outline was given, and she did the filling-in herself. She found ways of 'ministering,' and her heart was satisfied. She did not in the least resent Milton's words.

'He for God only, she for God in him;'

only in her case 'him' was first father, then brother or nephew.

In regard to her father, that she was able to be with him and to nurse him during his long, weary illness, was to her a source of deepest thankfulness. How good it was that she never knew that her very eagerness to serve him sometimes made her overshoot the mark, so defeating its end. I have heard her tell of going into his bedroom to give him food for which she thought he had waited too long. Forward she went to the window and pulled up the blind, so rapidly that the spring gave way and it rattled down again. 'Not so much birr, my dear,' her father said, and it did not seem to strike her that in those quiet words there was much repression of feeling. But reading her character so truly, and knowing the deep well of love in her heart, he bore in silence her occasional impetuosity.

Her absences from Arthur Lodge during the course of the day were frequent, — for she had

'to go to the Youngs,'[1] 'to see Miss Mayne,' to do various kindnesses in opposite quarters of the town, every day of her life, — but they were never prolonged. She often seemed to hurry home as if in some anxiety lest the house had taken fire; and her sudden appearance on the scene, breathless with expectation, when nothing unusual had happened, was apt to have a somewhat disquieting effect.

Surely it is not treason to the memory of a friend whose character one wholly reveres and loves to dwell for one moment on qualities, virtues perhaps carried to excess, which had however their drawbacks. Hers was not a soothing presence. She was too nimble in mind and body for that, and her tendency to be in motion, to swoop down upon a thing, whether door or window, or figuratively on some question of Church or State, was at times a trial both to father and brother. But when Rutland Street became

[1] Children of her elder sister.

her home, how nobly she set herself to do her work there, showing a wisdom and adaptability for which her previous life had given small preparation. And if Dr. John's sensitive, highly-strung nature had something to bear by coming into daily, hourly contact with hers, as sensitive as, but in a different way from, his own, she too had her burden. But bear it she did, asked and received strength, and was richly rewarded. Those last sixteen years of her brother's life, when she took the complete guidance of his household and guided it well, brought her deep happiness, if anxiety too. She won for herself a distinct place in the wide circle of his friends, and it was amusing to watch how gradually her individuality came to be recognized by some who at first nearly ignored her.

The brother and sister had many interests in common. Her relish for all that was best in literature was almost as strong and appreciative as his own, and her sense of the ludi-

crous as keen, though not so completely under control. Any one who had the good or bad fortune to rouse to the full her risible faculty was reminded of Wendell Holmes's 'Height of the Ridiculous,' and half inclined to agree with him in resolving never again to be 'as funny as I can.'

But above all, she and Dr. John were like one another in the intense interest they felt in their fellow-creatures. They might have been — without any trouble to themselves, and had their characters been quite different from what they were! — the veriest gossips that ever lived. Their memories were perfect. Any one who has listened to the tracing of intricate relationship that would follow the casual mention of a name will realize this. Their powers of observation were keen enough to be almost like an additional sense. They had mental photographs innumerable of people with whom their connection was very slight. Dangerous gifts these might have been in some

hands, but with them charity so ruled in their hearts, that it took away all possibility of anything but good and pleasure to themselves and to others arising from the exercise of their marvellous powers. Dr. John would come in at lunch-time, and mention having seen, probably from his carriage window, some 'old wizened face' that had haunted him with memories of the past. It would be all blank at first, but light would dawn; then a flash, he had got it. Isabella would next join in, and the old wizened face turned into one of the large family of rosy children, 'all baptized by my father in Broughton Place,' and the worth of the father and mother of the large family would be dwelt on, — an atmosphere of poetry and of pity being cast over all. If it was difficult even for them to say anything very good of some one whose name was mentioned, then there was a shake of the head, a sigh and silence. Wordsworth announces, in rather lofty fashion —

> 'I am not one who oft or much delight
> To season my fireside with personal talk.'

Well, they *did* so season their fireside, and delighted their friends thereby, yet none of the evils which the poet feared came of it. Their interest in 'Una,' and 'the gentle lady married to the Moor,' did not suffer, and neither 'rancor' nor 'malignant truth' was ever spoken by them. They cared only for things 'honest, just, pure, lovely, and of good report;' they thought on these things, and told them.

And they were true disciples of Wordsworth himself. Her copy of his poems (which by her written desire is now mine) was given her by Dr. John more than fifty years ago. It is carefully marked, and the marks show that she had discovered for herself the pure gold, long before Matthew Arnold or any other critic had come to assist in the search. Perhaps it was partly her admiration of Wordsworth that made the Lake district to her almost enchanted

ground. But this arose chiefly, I think, from its being the one lovely region beyond Scotland that she had ever visited. In these days of constant travelling to the ends of the earth, it is difficult to believe that she only once crossed the border of her native land, and that the Lake country was the limit of her journeying. She used to say that she had planned to enter London for the first time in a post-chaise, on her wedding trip; but, that trip never taking place, London she never saw. Her one grand tour then was Westmoreland, but how much wealth it brought her!

Her two brothers, John and William, and a companion of theirs, were with her. *They* walked, and she rode on a pony, lent her by a friend, the daughter of Dr. Thomson of Penrith, who died early, but whom she always remembered with true affection. The weather was perfect.

'The gleam, the shadow, and the peace profound,'

and all the loveliness sank into her heart, and dwelt there for evermore. When I went to the Lake district, though it must have been forty years after her visit, she wrote to me describing with perfect correctness every turn of the road, the position of the wooded crag, the little wayside inn, as if she had been there the week before. In later years the Lake country gained for her a fresh interest as the chosen home of Mr. Ruskin, and also of his friend Miss Susan Beever, with whom for years she kept up a close, lively correspondence. Miss Beever was one of the many unseen friends to whom she wrote, with all the freedom and reality of genuine friendship.

During her visits to New Abbey, her greatest pleasure, outside the manse, was to look at the view across the Solway. Indeed she scarcely cared to walk on any road from which she could not get 'a sight of the hills.' We did not need to ask what hills. During her last visit there, spring though it was, one day

broke wild and stormy, heavy snow-showers falling at intervals all morning. Toward evening the wind lulled, and though the sky was still dark and cloudy overhead, on the Solway there was a silvery light. The whole range was clearly seen, white from base to summit, and behind it a sky of quiet, tender blue, telling of a calm region beyond. Looking up from her book she noticed the change of light, and immediately rose from her seat by the fire. She looked out of the window for a moment, and then quickly left the room. I knew where she had gone, and so followed her, to the attic (Charlie's [1] room), from which the best view of the mountains can be had. We stood quite still for a minute or two, then she listened eagerly when I repeated the lines, —

> 'Far out of sight, while sorrow still enfolds us,
> Lies the fair country where our hearts abide,
> And of its bliss is nought more wondrous told us,
> Than these few words, "I shall be satisfied."

[1] Charles Stewart Wilson, Indian Civil Service.

'Shall they be satisfied, — the soul's vague longing,
The aching void that nothing earthly fills?
Oh, what desires upon my heart are thronging,
As I look upward to the heavenly hills!'

Her face told what the sight was to her: memory and anticipation both were there. Then with a look round Charlie's little room, and a sigh that he was so far away from it, she returned to the drawing-room to bury herself once more in her book.

Perhaps it was because of her increasing deafness and her decreasing strength, which made her constant running about on errands of kindness an impossibility, that reading became more and more her occupation and delight. The avidity with which she read genuine biography was only another phase of her hunger to share in the lives of others, not only in those of the men and women who were passing through this glad and sorrowful world along with her, but those who had done with all and had reached the shore. But whatever

she read needed to have the ring of reality about it. Oddness, remoteness from 'people of our own kind,' as she sometimes called it, she *could* stand, but flat, dreary conventionality wearied her at once. 'No, that won't do,' was her verdict after a quarter of an hour of the 'Life of Miss Agnes Strickland;' 'far too genteel society for me.' A certain degree of excellence had to be reached before she continued to read any book herself, and a still higher before she lent or gave it to a friend.

Her instinct for giving or lending books that were suited to each particular friend showed her keen discernment of character. Indeed, often her most direct way of showing that she understood the circumstances and tastes of any one with whom she was brought into contact was by giving, in the form of a book, mental food that refreshed and strengthened, — 'the finest of the wheat.'

The number of letters she wrote was quite

wonderful. Some of her correspondents she had never seen, others she had perhaps only met once or twice, but under circumstances that drew forth her sympathy, and the link held fast for life. Then, besides her purely personal correspondence, she kept all the members of the wide family circle *en rapport* with one another. One belonging to that circle writes: 'What I, who lived at a distance from her, shall most miss, now that she is gone, are the letters of peculiar understanding and deep sympathy which used to come in times of trouble, or it might be of rarer joy, the few strong words which were always harmonious, high, and strengthening to faith, as well as those letters which spoke of her own sorrows and naturally and confidently claimed the sympathy and participation in them which her own deep heart was so ready to give to others.' Endless forwarding of family letters took place, but always with a purpose, and that purpose a high one, — to deepen love and goodwill.

How one recalls the quick opening of her desk, and hears the swift movement of her pen over the paper, which begins almost before she has taken time to sit down! Sometimes she merely stood whilst she dashed off a kindly note of inquiry or addressed a newspaper or magazine containing some marked paragraph that would bring interest and cheer to an absent friend. If she enclosed in a letter — and she sometimes did — a printed hymn or 'leaflet,' one might feel sure it was not only good in a religious sense, but in a literary one too. With the practice of merely enclosing a scrap of print, with nothing in it specially appropriate to the receiver, or specially good in the thing itself, she had no sympathy. I remember going in one day when she had just got a letter with a leaflet enclosed. She had read it and looked troubled. 'What can I do with it?' she said. 'It is well meant;' but, with a most expressive look and shrug, 'I don't like it.' 'Reverently burn it,' I

said, and suited the action to the word. She looked first horrified, then greatly relieved.

Especially for her younger friends she took the greatest pains in the selection of the books she gave. Had she not believed it a very direct manner of influencing for good, she would not have allowed herself to spend so much money in this one way as she did. The proportion between her bookseller's and dressmaker's accounts must have been exactly the opposite of what is usual. 'A grand thing has happened,' was her greeting one morning, as she held up a note which told that twelve copies of 'The Story of Ida' were on their way to her. Her face beamed with pleasure, and she said in her most earnest tones, 'Now, the distribution of these will need the most careful and prayerful consideration; they must go to two classes of young girls, — those who are sure to like it, and those whom I would like to like it.' The publication of that book was an

event to her, securing for her as it did the friendship of 'Francesca.' Though they never saw one another in the flesh, their spirits met, and recognition will be easy hereafter.

But books were not the only gifts she gave. She had quite an elaborate system by which the skill of one friend could be made to minister to the needs of another, she being the medium of bringing them together. The reading of the announcement of some birth in the 'Scotsman' would lead to the exclamation, 'There 's an occasion for one of Cousin Janet's very best and most beautifully knitted pair of boots, or jacket,' and away she would go and the order would be given. The number of small stockings she herself knitted and gave away must have been enormous. Nieces and nephews came first in the administration, and, as years went on, their children were supplied. Then came a large outer circle, composed of all manner of people, including tramway-car con-

ductors, the children of the gardener, and so on, and so on, to whom cuffs and mittens and stockings were given. In later years her knitting always lay near her chair or couch, and was taken up as a rest after a long time of reading, — or rather, I think, she closed the book at some passage which she had greatly enjoyed, that her mind might dwell upon it. The familiar work occupied her fingers only, and her thoughts could roam at will.

And now, almost without knowing it, we have come to think of her as an old lady, — yes, quite old. Dr. John died in May, 1882, and she and his son remained in Rutland Street till the following May. There was rest to her in the thought that her dearly loved brother had entered into peace, and that she had still some one to care for. She liked better to call 7 Morningside Place 'my nephew's house,' than to speak of it as her own. When he invited friends, she was most anxious that all should go smoothly. Seated at the head of the table,

wearing her invariable black silk dress and most spotless cap and shawl, with a slight flush of pink in her cheeks, and light in her eyes, she looked as pretty a picture of an old lady as one could see.

There was much about the little house and its surroundings that she greatly liked. The garden was a constant source of pleasure to her. She gave nosegays to all her friends; she again waged warfare against the dandelions, and carried it on as victoriously as she had done thirty years before at Arthur Lodge. Then of the 'view of the Pentlands' she never tired. She delighted to point out to her numerous friends that she had a different view from dining-room and from drawing-room, and her little couch placed across the dining-room windows was an ideal seat for her. From it, when she looked up from book or work, she could not only see the hills, but friends at the gate, or nearer still, passing the windows, for the gate-bell she never heard. When this welcome

sight greeted her, down went the book or knitting, and she was at the door in a twinkling. She never lost the swiftness of movement so characteristic of her. Her mind had all its old spring, and her body was so light that it seemed easily to obey the commands of her spirit.

Many of her friends are now glad to have copies of the portrait which my sister was able to make,[1] as she half sat, half lay on the said little couch. We have pleasant recollections of those morning sittings, for I had my share in the work too. She needed to be read or talked to, and on congenial subjects; for, had she wearied, no true likeness of her could have been secured.[2] But the sittings were short, as our house was so near, and running out and in was so much our habit.

This leads me to mention that being 'only

[1] This was in 1885.

[2] A reference to Froude's 'Life of Carlyle' called forth an expression so little to be desired that the artist issued the peremptory order (unheard by her sitter) 'Shunt from that *at once*.'

three doors from the M'L——s' she considered one of the amenities of her new home. It was truly a very great pleasure to us. We ministered to one another, as she often said, 'in things spiritual and carnal.' Almost every morning before ten o'clock she appeared at our gate, and fortunately her key opened it, so in she came, without let or hindrance, to tell of the letters she had got, and very often to read them. This was only the first intercourse of the day, for many were our errands to and fro. Once in going with her from our house to hers, I told her that a neighbor, seeing our many traffickings, had asked 'if we had known Miss Brown before she came to Morningside, or only since.' She gave me one of her most expressive looks, as if words failed her. 'She must indeed believe in mushroom friendships,' she at last said. 'No' — then she clasped my arm still more firmly — 'our friendship is the result of long years of joy and sorrow shared.' I said I dimly knew how much I owed her. She

spoke of a 'debt' too; and then in most emphatic tones, 'But it is an account we neither of us ever wish to close.'

Living so near, I was able to see far more of her than would have been possible had we lived further apart, and could arrange to do things for her, or go with her, as seemed best. One appointment I remember very distinctly. Mr. Gladstone was in town, and to my suggestion that there would be a crowd, and perhaps she had better stay at home, she had but one decided answer, 'I mean to see him.' So I came at the hour appointed. In reply to my 'Are you ready?' she answered almost severely, as if she detected a tinge of levity in my tone (but she was wrong), 'Yes, I 'm ready, and my very finest, whitest handkerchief is ready too, to be waved in his honor.' And waved it was.

But any sketch of her life at Morningside Place would be incomplete without a reference to her Sundays there. 'I never weary of my

Sabbath reading,' she used to say. 'I have, to begin with, Herbert, Vinet, Erskine, and your brother-in-law [Dr. M'Laren of Manchester], and what more can mortal want?' Some mortals would wish much more, or different. It was a pleasure to her to be one of the original members of the Braid United Presbyterian Church, and in every way she showed her sympathy with its work. She was faithful to the Church of her fathers always, though she strongly disapproved of the Synod's petitioning for Disestablishment, or indeed for anything else. On one occasion she vigorously shook hands with my brother, a true out-and-out voluntary, when he said, 'If the State as a State has nothing to do with the Church, the Church as a Church has nothing to do with the State.' 'Let them act as citizens,' she said, 'as strenuously as they like, and let the true, spiritual idea of a Church, such as Vinet had, become a reality, and Disestablishment will come in God's own good time.'

I remember, one lovely spring morning, going with her to church. She enjoyed the view of the Braid Hills as we walked toward them, and not less did she enjoy the endless greetings that were exchanged by the way. Almost every one seemed to know her, and even after she was seated in her pew, two little girls in front, who were eagerly watching, had to be presented with 'a wee packet of sweeties each,' which they quite understood were *not* to be consumed on the premises. This presentation did not take place every Sunday; for she discovered that an old man, who sat near her and them, wished to give sweeties too, so alternate Sundays were arranged and kept to. She could hear but little of the sermon; though, that she might hear as much as possible, she finally sat in the elders' seat, a welcome guest, having ascertained that if she sat 'well into the corner,' she was not much seen. But whether she heard much or not, she liked to worship with others. A visit from some of the Youngs and from

Alexander completed the pleasures of the day, — most of all she looked forward to Alexander's visit, and he scarcely ever failed her.

After she came to Morningside Place, she still was able for, and looked forward eagerly to, her annual visit to New Abbey, and to almost the very last she went to Crofthead, a place that had for her early and cherished associations, and to Busby too, but it was very apparent that her strength was lessening. Although she began each morning with the old enthusiasm, her daily round became more and more contracted: the spirit was willing, but the flesh was weak. She never gave up going to 'Aunt Smith's.'[1] Her ties were now so much with those younger than herself, that to have her father's sister still with her, who had known and loved her when she was a girl, was to her a true joy. But more and more

[1] Sister of her father, and widow of the Rev. Dr. Smith, who succeeded Dr. Brown as minister in Biggar.

she was content that friends and relatives should come to see *her*, and they did come. 'I seldom go to Belgrave Crescent now,' she would say, 'for Jane [Mrs. Crum Brown] is so good in coming to see me,' and her expeditions by car, which used to be so frequent, were now the exception, not the rule. Though there was rest to her in the thought that 'John,' 'Janet,' and 'William' had all gone

'Into the world of light'

(and very often she quoted those lines in speaking of them), yet

'I alone sit lingering here'

was deeply felt by her too. The books she read did not mean so much to her, when they were not to be passed on to them. Reading with their eyes or ears had for long, almost without her knowing it, been the habit of her mind, and though she still read, and lent books too, there was a flatness over it all.

I remember, on going in one morning, three

or four weeks before any signs of illness were visible, that I was conscious that there was a want of the usual spring to meet me. She had her desk on the table, and newspaper wrappers were on it, addressed to Ella Young, Nimmo Brown, and Charlie Wilson. I offered to post them, but she said, 'Oh, no; I have to get the "Weekly Scotsman" to put in them yet, and I am going for them myself. I can do so little now I have to magnify the few offices that remain.' I had an undefined feeling of disquietude, but it passed as she became brighter, and interested in what I told her.

But soon after the shadow fell, the shadow that was never lightened here. And yet that last year may not have been so sad to her as to her friends. Not three months before the end, when I was sitting with her in the sunshine, she suddenly looked up and said in an awe-struck voice, 'I never go to church now;' and then, almost with a bright look, 'Well,

I 'm not quite sure, I *think* I was there this morning;' then, after a pause, 'but I don't know what is dream and what is reality.' She knows now.

One of the last times I saw her I like specially to recall. It was the true farewell. Though quite unable to speak, paralysis having gradually done its dire work, she evidently recognized those about her. Her eyes, clear and blue, followed Agnes Young lovingly as she moved through the room, brought her flowers to look at, and gave her some food, which she seemed to relish when given by her much-loved niece. Then she turned and looked at me, as if she wished to include us both in her earnest gaze. We stood close together, and after a minute or two, I repeated the last verse of the 23d Psalm. As long as I live I shall be glad to recall her look of deep response, as very slowly I said the last two lines, —

'And in God's house for evermore
My dwelling-place shall be.'

Then, remembering how she loved to be loved, and how many there were who longed, but would never be able, to bid her a loving farewell, I said, earnestly, 'And none of us will ever forget you.' Again the look of truest feeling, and a gentle dropping of the eyelids, the only sign of response she could give, a kiss and interchange of thought and feeling with her, which had long been one of the pleasures of my life, was ended.

Not long after[1] her spirit reached the land which had sometimes seemed to her 'very far off.' It is not difficult to think of her in a spiritual world. All that she cared for here could very easily be transferred, —

> 'The streams on earth I 've tasted
> More deep I 'll drink above.'

We can believe that the wishes expressed in lines (Whittier's) which she often tremulously quoted, were fulfilled to her —

[1] November 6, 1888.

'Suffice it if, my good and ill unreckoned,
And both forgiven through Thy abounding grace,
I find myself by hands familiar beckoned
Unto my fitting place.

'Some humble door amid Thy many mansions,
Some sheltering shade, where sin and striving cease,
And flows forever through heaven's green expansions,
The river of Thy peace.

'There from the music round about me stealing
I fain would learn the new and holy song,
And find *at last*, beneath Thy tree of healing,
The life for which I long.'

Her body lies, as she wished, in the quiet little churchyard at Symington, in that grave the closing of which is so vividly described by Dr. John.[1] The funeral was watched with interest by many. The church-bell was tolled in token of respect, and one can picture how there would spread over the district a wave of recollection of the family whose connection with the place was fast becoming a tradition of the past. And nothing would have pleased her more than that, as a consequence

[1] See Note C, p. 90.

of her death, her father's name should again be heard in Biggar by the children, and children's children, of those whom in the early years of his lifelong ministry he had so faithfully taught.

April, 1889.

Your Mother's grave has the long shadows of evening lying across it, the sunlight falling on the letters of her name, and on the number of her years. — From 'Jeems the Doorkeeper.'

Note C (p. 88).

In 'Letter to Dr. Cairns,' Dr. John gives his recollections of his mother's funeral. He was five years old at the time of his mother's death.

We got to the churchyard and stood round the open grave. My dear old grandfather was asked by my father to pray; he did. . . . Then, to my surprise and alarm, the coffin, resting on its bearers, was placed over that dark hole, and I watched with curious eye the unrolling of those neat black bunches of cords, which I have often enough seen since. My father took the one at the head, and also another, much smaller, springing from the same point as his, which he had caused to be put there, and unrolling it, put it into my hand. I twisted it firmly round my fingers, and awaited the result; the burial-men with their real ropes lowered the coffin, and when it rested at the bottom — it was too far down for me to see — my father first and abruptly let his cord drop, followed by the rest. This was too much. I now saw what was meant, and held on and fixed my fist and feet, and I believe my father had some difficulty in forcing open my small fingers; he let the little black cord drop, and I remember, in my misery and despair, seeing its open end disappearing in the gloom. — *Rab and his Friends, and other Papers*, Edition 1882, p. 8.

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